

"I Would Do Everything to Help, Shy of..."

MONTHLY UPDATE FROM SUSANNA DIRKS

APRIL 2020



Dear Friend,

During each of the three days of our outreach at the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) in March, a group of protesters showed up early and stayed the entire day. On the first day, I made friends with two of them. This camaraderie extended to six members of their group who engaged in conversation with me that week. It was a beautiful experience: bridging the gap of those 20 feet between their "side" and ours. One of these students I'll call Ann-Marie talked with me several times. In our first encounter, we found common ground in the topics of birth control and sex education.

Ann-Marie then asked a question point-blank: "What about rape?" This question always causes me to pause. I firmly believe that you can never be too careful when answering this question. For instance, I didn't know at the time of her question that a dear friend of hers had been assaulted at a young age. This was personal for her. She wanted to know if I cared about her friend as much as I care about the unborn. Knowing that this question is many times very personal, I started slowly, addressing the relational challenge at length before answering the intellectual challenge.

I told her I think that rape is one of the worst things on earth. It is one of the greatest evils that one human can do to another. I told her how much I care about victims of rape and helping them to heal from their trauma. She said, "Wouldn't it be cruel to force a woman to carry her assailant's baby?" With concern I said, "It would be extremely hard. I do know of some people who kept their assailant's baby and said it was the thing that allowed them to heal because they had a good avenue for working out their grief: they were able to care for someone else, which in turn helped them care for themselves. It would be very difficult to live with that reminder, but aborting the baby doesn't remove the horror that was done to her in the first place."

When we had discussed this much common ground, I sensed it was time to address the intellectual argument behind the question. I said essentially this: "Here's the one area in which we might disagree. I would do everything to help a victim of trauma, shy of ending or harming a human life. I believe that the unborn are human in the same way that you and I are human, and so I think abortion should be left off the table when we're talking about how to help women who have been raped."

Ann-Marie accepted this response and thanked me for answering her questions. We had more opportunities to talk in the next few days. All that common ground and gentleness while still holding my convictions was a springboard for better understanding in these follow-up interactions.

In Christ,

Susanna Dirks



Andrew and I have exciting news to share! Baby James Dirks is due in September! We are so excited to expand our family. My health has improved significantly in the second trimester, and it is a joy to feel the little guy kick and move around (except when I'm trying to sleep ;)) We appreciate your prayers for health, preparation, and peace in the coming months.

